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ABSTRACT

Four recent journal articles and one meeting paper on teacher involvement in curriculum development are summarized in this research bulletin. Contents include "Motivating Teacher Involvement in Professional Growth Activities," by Ruth Wright; "Teacher Participation in Curriculum Development: What Status Does It Have?" by Jean Young; "The Locus of Curriculum Decision Making and Teachers' Perceptions of Their Own Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Curriculum Planning," by Richard Kimpston and Douglas Anderson; "The Supportiveness of the Principal in School-based Curriculum Development," by Laurie Brady; and "Curriculum Change from the Grass Roots," by David Martin and Philip Saif. Ruth Wright concludes that the most powerful motivators for teachers are intrinsic rather than extrinsic; seeing the results of their input is a significant reward. Jean Young also found that teachers involved in their own schools' curriculum plans were the most committed. That teachers are more responsive to district-level curriculum decision-making is the conclusion of the Kimpston and Anderson study. Other factors for successful teacher-influenced curriculum development include preparation for a long-term process and the vital importance of principal support, factors identified by Martin and Saif, and Brady, respectively. (LMI)

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Research ROUNDUP
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development

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By Bruce Bowers

Historically school teachers have been viewed as rulers of their own tiny fiefdoms, their classrooms, and as having little or no contact with anyone but their students. In recent decades, however, this "isolationist" perspective has gradually been diminished, largely because of the proliferation of teacher committees generated by collective bargaining agreements between teacher unions and school districts. Such agreements have altered the overall climate of educational decision-making: teachers have emerged from the classroom to collaborate with their colleagues and with administrators to influence a wide range of educational policies.

This trend in decision-making has been most obvious in the area of curriculum. After all, teachers are the ultimate arbiters of curriculum because they implement it. The question is, to what extent should they be involved in the development of curriculum prior to its arrival in the classroom? Some argue that teachers are not trained to do this, and, besides, their days are so filled with the nuts and bolts of preparing lessons, teaching, and grading that they have little time or energy left for the painstaking effort required to develop new curricula.

Those in favor of greater teacher involvement in curriculum development argue persuasively, however, that to the extent teachers feel they own the curriculum, they will be more competent and enthusiastic about implementing it. As for the problem of teachers being too busy, proponents assert that extra time can, and is, being carved out for teacher participation in school or district curriculum committees.

Prepared by ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, which commissioned Bruce C. Bowers, Ph.D., research analyst and writer.

What are some of the variables influencing teacher involvement in curriculum development, and how is that involvement translated into successful implementation in the classroom?

Ruth Wright concludes that the most powerful motivators for teachers are *in*trinsic rather than *ex*trinsic. Extra pay or release time for participation in curriculum committees is viewed favorably by most teachers, but the expectation that their involvement will result in a significant improvement in the existing curriculum is more critical to continued teacher participation.

Support for such a view is found in Jean Young's assessment of how Canadian teachers value their experience in curriculum development. Teachers working on curriculum at the local level generally felt that the curriculum materials under development were likely to be used in their schools and classrooms.

Richard Kimpston and Douglas Anderson conclude, however, that teachers are more likely to follow or attend to curriculum decisions made at the district level, as opposed to the school or classroom level. The researchers explain that teachers tend to respect a district's well-crafted curriculum development program. When curriculum decisions emanate from the district, it is usually because the district has historically placed a high priority on curriculum development.

As for factors that influence successful implementation of a teacher-generated curriculum, Laurie Brady points to the active support of the school principal as critical to overall satisfaction with school-based curriculum development. In addition, say David Martin and Philip Saif, only by preparing for a "long haul" where years, not months, are spent on curriculum development can change be successfully implemented in the school curriculum.

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2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(1) Wright, Ruth. **"Motivating Teacher Involvement in Professional Growth Activities."** *The Canadian Administrator* 24,5 (February 1985): 1-6. EJ 313 717.

What motivates teachers to go beyond the normal call of duty and become involved in "professional growth activities"? Ruth Wright turns to the literature on expectancy theory, which has its roots in studies of motivation in industry. The basic premise of expectancy theory is that people are motivated to act if they believe the outcome will be good.

Wright wanted to know what kinds of outcomes would motivate teachers to become involved in curriculum development. She asked 640 randomly selected full-time teacher members of the New Brunswick (Canada) Teachers Association to list in rank-order ten incentives for each of seven different tasks in curriculum development. Wright then determined the relative importance of each incentive—*across tasks*—to produce an overall ranking of the ten top incentives.

The most startling finding was that only one of the ten incentives, "provision of materials for use in your school," could be considered an extrinsic reward. It was in sixth place. Conspicuously absent from the list were such extrinsic reinforcers as extra pay, release time, or other income-related items. Instead, at the top of the list of ten preferred items were (1) opportunity to improve the existing curriculum, (2) increased effectiveness as a teacher, (3) feeling that one's contributions and suggestions are helpful, and (4) satisfaction from participating in decision-making that affects one's own work.

From these findings Wright concludes that, in order for administrators to motivate teachers to become involved in curriculum development, they must convince teachers that their involvement will make a significant and recognized contribution to the educational development of children. By demonstrating that teacher participation is genuinely sought and by assuring teachers that the results of their efforts will be implemented in their classrooms, administrators can obtain strong teacher support for, and participation in, curriculum development.

(2) Young, Jean. **"Teacher Participation in Curriculum Development: What Status Does It Have?"** *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 3, 2 (Winter 1988): 109-21. EJ 363 405.

Young interviewed thirty-one full-time teachers in the province of Alberta, Canada, who were heavily involved in curriculum committee work: fifteen at the local level and sixteen at the provincial level. On the surface her findings occasionally contradict those of Wright, who concluded that intrinsic rather than extrinsic incentives were the prime motivators for teacher involvement in curriculum development.

Many of Young's teachers, especially those doing local committee work, seemed to resent the lack of funds for release time or extra pay for their work. One teacher thought so few colleagues were involved in curriculum committee work "because you're not getting paid for it."

However, other teachers gave a different point of view, one more congruent with Wright's. One teacher responded to the question of motivation by saying, "I was going to mention the financial reward, but I honestly believe that it is insignificant for teachers. Otherwise, they wouldn't be teaching."

More support for Wright's findings was evident when the teachers were asked about potential use of the curriculum materials produced. Teachers at the provincial level expressed almost universal skepticism that the materials they were developing would in fact be used. They blamed a lack of resolve at the provincial administrative level and teacher resistance at the local level. Their lack of motivation can be attributed to the more intrinsic factor of feeling unappreciated.

But such was not the case among teachers working on curriculum committees within their own schools. Since those committees had been formed specifically to deal with problems within their schools, the committee work had immediate and concrete application in the classroom, a form of intrinsic reinforcement.

A recurring theme among the teachers in this study was the perceived lack of support by administrators for professional growth activities generally. As one teacher noted, "That's always a problem in education... the reluctance to actually give time or recognize professional development."

Young also poses what she considers the three most critical questions principals must ask themselves when they begin to assess the potential for teacher involvement in curriculum development:

1. To what extent do they perceive the teacher's role

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as confined to the classroom or as extending beyond it?

2. Do principals see participation in curriculum development as a desirable way for teachers to grow professionally?

3. In what ways do principals' attitudes toward teacher participation in curriculum development affect the feasibility and quality of that participation?

(3) Kimpstom, Richard, and Douglas Anderson. **"The Locus of Curriculum Decision Making and Teachers' Perceptions of Their Own Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Curriculum Planning."** *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 1, 2 (Winter 1986): 100-10. EJ 331 287.

Kimpstom and Anderson investigated the question of whether teachers' attitudes toward their school curriculum varied according to the locus of curriculum decision-making. Would it be different if that locus were at the district level, rather than the school or classroom level? Kimpston and Anderson used the Curriculum Decision-Making Inventory (CDI) to classify fifty-seven school districts according to their locus of decision making. They then employed a stratified random sampling strategy to select two districts from each of three classifications for an indepth study, six districts in all.

Data were collected from superintendents, curriculum personnel, principals, and a random sample of teachers in all six districts. Most teachers in the six districts were given the Teacher Self-Analysis Inventory (TSAI), which measures teachers' perceptions of their behavior toward their schools' curricula, and the Curriculum Attitude Inventory (CAI), which measures teacher attitudes toward curriculum use and planning.

Results suggest that when the district is the locus of curriculum decision-making, teachers are likely to follow the curriculum formulated for their district. However, when the school is the locus of curriculum decision-making, teachers are less inclined to follow district formulated curricula. And in schools where the classroom is the locus of curriculum decision-making, teachers are *least* likely to follow curriculum guidelines handed down from the district.

Can these findings be made consistent with Young's conclusion that teachers are more likely to respond to curricula developed within their own school? A closer observation of the districts examined in Kimpston and Anderson's sample reveals why, in some districts, teachers are more likely to respect district-initiated curricula. In the two districts where the locus of decision-making was at the district level, there existed well-established curriculum development programs having their own directors. The authors say that in these two districts "curriculum concerns were raised to a greater level of importance and visibility than was the case in the remaining four districts."

(4) Brady, Laurie. **"The Supportiveness of the Principal in School-based Curriculum Development."** *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 17, 1 (January-March 1985): 95-97. EJ 319 061.

In her analysis of school-based curriculum development, Laurie Brady highlights the critical position of the school principal. She surveyed 277 teachers in New South Wales, attempting to test the claim that school-based curriculum development is not successful in a supportive school climate.

Brady used the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) to see how teachers perceive school organization, the behavior of the school principal, and the nature of staff interaction. She correlated the results with other results obtained from separate measures of a school's curriculum decision-making. Finally she measured teacher satisfaction with different approaches to school-based curriculum development.

Brady's results suggest that the key factor behind teacher satisfaction with school-based curriculum development was the degree of principal support. Where the principal focused more on school operations and supervisory responsibilities, teacher satisfaction with curriculum development was low. But where the principal was involved more with the personal and professional welfare of the instructional staff, teacher satisfaction with curriculum development was high.

Further, the more supportive the principal seemed to be, the more likely were the teachers to view curricular decisions as group-based. In a supportive climate, teachers were a more cohesive staff and individual teachers felt less isolated about their own roles in curriculum development.

These findings reinforce the conclusions of an earlier *Research Roundup* (April 1990), which cited the pivotal role of a "highly motivated, goal-oriented individual" (usually the principal) in initiating fundamental change in schools.

(5) Martin, David, and Philip Saif. **"Curriculum Change from the Grass Roots."** Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Chicago, IL, March 22-26, 1985). ED 254 913.

"The office shelves of school administrators and the bottom drawers of teachers' desks are strewn with unused and dust-covered copies of 'new' curriculum guides intended to truly change school programs. Why have so many paper products come to such inglorious ends after apparently so much hard work of well-meaning curriculum change agents?" Martin and Saif attempt to answer this question by pointing to the one factor that may make the difference: teacher "ownership" of that curriculum.

How is such ownership achieved? Martin and Saif argue that it is not through a "traditional" approach to curriculum development, in which the superintendent (or principal, at the school level) orchestrates the entire effort. They favor a "grass roots approach," in which all faculty members are involved in the curriculum. In their version, not *all* teachers, but a large enough number of teachers are involved so that the staff in general has a sense of ownership of the developing curriculum.

Beyond this, the curriculum must be developed in a *systematic* and *pervasive* way. That is, it is more likely to be adopted if the development follows this series of critical steps:

1. Identifying the needed change
2. Forming a committee to write the rationale and objectives
3. Forming subcommittees to write prerequisites and activities and to select materials and evaluation methods
4. Obtaining feedback, not only from teachers but also from consultants and from the community
5. Pilot-testing the curriculum
6. Revising the curriculum based upon the pilot testing.
7. Conducting a final evaluation of the curriculum
8. Implementing the curriculum on a school- or district-wide basis

The entire development may take as long as several years. However, rather than the traditional, top-down approach, Martin and Saif suggest that the bottom-up involvement of a large and representative number of teachers in a carefully structured, incremental process is more likely to produce a well-regarded curriculum.

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